



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UD&P Committee
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: February 15, 2006

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Update for February 22, 2006

Land Use and Building Production for January 2006

Performance to Production Goals:

We are showing good improvement in reaching our goal to publish 80% of Master Use Permit decisions in 120 days. For January, we reached 74%, compared to our 2005 yearly average of 60% and a fourth quarter 2005 average of 71%.

MUP Application Characteristics:

In January, DPD received 94 Land Use applications compared to 62 in January 2005, a 52% increase. Platting Actions (short plats, unit lot subdivisions and lot boundary adjustments) continue to be about half of all new applications. Environmental review (19%) and Conditional Use review (12%) make up the next highest number of applications. Design Review activity remains high with 11 new EDG (early design guidance) applications in January, which equates to about 11.5% of land use review. This is fairly consistent with the pattern over the past couple of years.

Building Permit Performance:

We processed 577 applications as non-routed (simple) plans. For January, 69% received initial plan review within 48 hours; 75% were reviewed in 72 hours and 80% had received their initial review within 96 hours. Our goal is 80%.

We processed 220 applications as routed (complex) plans and 50% of them received their initial plan review within 6 weeks; 60% within 7 weeks; 65% by the 8th week. While we are still short of our goal of 70%, we are making improvements compared with 2005.



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Walk In Services:

To provide you with an understanding of the volume of business handled by DPD staff, we offer the following statistics:

The Applicant Services Center (ASC) saw 1,309 customers for coaching in January (783 customers for Land Use issues, 475 for construction issues and 51 for technical backup). Half of the customers were served within 30 minutes or less; 79% within one hour or less.

The Over-the-Counter (OTC) desk served 779 customers, with 99% of the customers served within 30 minutes or less.

Plans Routing saw 643 customers for permit issuance activities; 88% of them received service in 30 minutes or less.

Electrical Inspections

In January, we received calls for 3,087 electrical inspections, of which 97% were performed when requested, which is generally the day after the request call.

Code Compliance Update**Condominium Conversions in 2005:**

As previously reported, we experienced a very large increase in requests for condominium conversion inspections in 2005. Previously we had estimated that the total number of units planned for conversion would total approximately 1300. The year-end actual totals are 59 properties containing 1551 units, as compared to 345 units in 2004.

Update on Central Area Enforcement Issue:

A total of eight separate parcels owned by one property owner at the intersection of East Madison and East Denny, have been of concern to the neighborhood. At the pre-trial settlement conference on January 25, the magistrate granted the owner four additional weeks to cure the remaining violations, including moving two improperly parked and probably inoperable, vehicles, and replacing cracked glazing. In addition, we have issued three new violation notices for some of the same types of violations which were already referred to the Law Department – junk storage and inoperable vehicles. The new violation notices are on parcels not cited under our two previous notices. The owner indicates he is in the process of selling the properties.

Green Building Team

As you recall from budget discussions, the Green Building Team is now consolidated at DPD, rather than scattered among several departments. We believe this is very important to have them all together at DPD to most efficiently and effectively continue to lead the market transformation to green buildings and sustainable development. The City has been a great example with City Hall, the Justice Center, the Library and many more structures. Now, we are working to increase the number of private market developers who build sustainably.

Homeowners, home buyers and building professionals will soon find it easier to use sustainable (green) technologies by taking advantage of expanded expertise and incentives offered by the City. The new City team will work to remove barriers to green building so that market transformation strategies can be effectively implemented.

The new green building program will focus on key market sectors that align with DPD's customer base – single family residential, multifamily residential, and commercial/industrial/institutional. The program will also focus on integrating sustainability into urban design and neighborhood planning.

The green building team will also help to train DPD permit and plan review staff in green building strategies, and provide technical assistance to permit applicants. As a result staff will be able to target projects that could implement green features early in the design and permit process.

The new program also supports many of the City's broader economic, environmental and community goals, including energy conservation and climate protection, water conservation and watershed protection, waste reduction and recycling, affordable housing, and healthy communities.

Outreach ... Recent Past and Future

January 19	Design Commission Design Excellence Awards
January 29	Permit staff participation at the annual Phinney Home Improvement Fair
January 30	“The Future of Green Building” with Rick Fedrizzi, CEO and founding chair of the US Green Building Council
February 1	Central Waterfront Concept Plan Open House
Feb 11 & 25	Public Landslide Information Meetings
February 22	Trash Fashion Bash and Cake Competition; Seattle Asian Art Museum
March 2	“The High Cost of Free Parking” with Donald Shoup, Professor of Urban Planning, UCLA; UW Architecture Hall
March 15	Livable South Downtown Open House; Bertha Landes Room, City Hall

Outreach ... Abroad

Visiting other countries provides one with a real appreciation of what we have in Seattle ... it's all a matter of comparison. We have no traffic problems, perfect streets and sidewalks, blue sky, clean air and lots of green!

Seoul, Korea: After one staff person presented in Seoul in the fall and a half dozen officials visit Seattle in December, I was asked to speak at the “International Workshop on Seoul Greenways 2006.” They are fascinated by what we are doing in Seattle. The workshop was sponsored by Seoul Green Trust Foundation and Yuhan-Kimberly, partnering with Seoul National University. They are looking for ways to enhance the city's quality of life as well as its competitiveness. Seattle and New York are being used as benchmarks.

University students are designing an alternative to a development proposal, which would provide a great pedestrian connection between a major public open space to-be-developed (former US military base) and their extensive waterfront. The good news is that much of the waterfront has a pedestrian pathway; however, amenities are very limited, and there are only two access points connecting very dense residential development and the waterfront. A highway divides the two areas.

Considering Seoul grew from half a million people to more than ten million since the 1970s, it is amazing that the city works as well as it does. In a short three year time period, they tore down an elevated freeway that cut through the city, and built a stream with pedestrian amenities, waterfalls, creative bridges, and pathways along the way.

Kaohsiung, Taiwan: The theme of the “International Summit of Waterfront Cities” was similar to Seoul’s workshop. This was Seattle’s opportunity to talk about the vision for our great waterfront city.

Kaohsiung, a city of 1.5 million people, is working to transform itself from an industrial city to a “friendly ecological city” that is competitive, attractive and prosperous. They’ve also cleaned up the polluted Love River in a few short years, rimming the river with lights, sidewalk cafes and pedestrian paths.

